

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 8599

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 3798

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 4)

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, PINT LE, IS, SY, UNSC

SUBJECT: CRISIS IN LEBANON

REF: STATE 171004

1. SUMMARY. FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS URGES THAT WE NOT PROCEED WITH PLANS TO MOVE LEBANESE QUESTION IN SECURITY COUNCIL. HE FEELS TO DO SO WOULD BE DISASTROUS FOR LEBANON. HE SUGGESTS WE TALK TO SYRIANS IN STARK TERMS ABOUT POSSIBILITY ISRAELI INTERVENTION AND THAT WE URGE ISRAELIS TO PUT PRESSURE ON CHRISTIAN MILITIAS TO HOLD THEIR FIRE. HE SAYS SARKIS HAS PUT HIS RESIGNATION IN THE

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FREEZER FOR THE MOMENT WHILE WAITING TO SEE IF WAY OUT CAN BE FOUND. END SUMMARY

2. WE ASSUME REFTEL IS RESPONSE TO OUR 3766 EVEN THOUGH THAT IS NOT MENTIONED AS REFERENCE. IN ANY EVENT, I DISCUSSED THE INCOMING WITH BOUTROS RATHER THAN TUENI AT PALACE THIS MORNING. DO NOT THINK IT

APPROPRIATE FOR ME DISCUSS POLICY MATTER OF THIS SERIOUS-
NESS DIRECTLY WITH TUENI WITHOUT FIRST GOING THROUGH
BOUTROS.

3. IN BRIEF, BOUTROS AND SARKIS CONTINUE TO ASK THAT
WE NOT GO TO SECURITY COUNCIL WITH LEBANESE PROBLEM AT
THIS POINT. BOUTROS SAYS THIS IS OPTION WE CAN KEEP
UNDER CONSIDERATION BUT THAT TO GO TO COUNCIL NOW
WOULD INFURIATE THE SYRIANS WHO WOULD REACT FORCE-
FULLY AGAINST LEBANESE AND COUNTRY WOULD BE SPLIT (NOT
THAT IT IS ALL THAT UNIFIED). HE NOTED THAT ADF WAS HERE
VW REQUEST LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AND WITH APPROVAL OF ARAB
SUMMIT. SYRIANS WERE ENGAGED IN POLICE ACTION AGAINST
GANGS WHICH HAD NO LEGAL STATUS. (HE SAW WHAT WAS GOING
ON AT PRESENT AS A STRUGGLE FOR INFLUENCE BETWEEN SYRIANS
AND ISRAELIS BEING PLAYED OUT THROUGH THE LEBANESE FRONT AND
SYRIAN ARMY.) SYRIAN POSITION WAS THAT THEY WERE SIMPLY
DEFENDING THEMSELVES AND TRYING TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER.
TO RAISE THIS ISSUE IN UN SECURITY COUNCIL WOULD BE TO
INTERJECT OUTSIDERS INTO FAMILY QUARREL AND WOULD BE
TO RAISE PHALANGE AND CHAMOUNISTS TO LEVEL OF EQUAL PARTIES
WITH SYRIANS. THIS WOULD BE COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE
TO SYRIANS.

4. WE DISCUSSED NATURE OF LEBANESE "COMMAND" OF ADF.
I ASKED IF LEBANESE COULD NOT ORDER SYRIANS TO MODERATE
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THEIR ATTACK. BOUTROS SAID THAT WAS WHAT SARKIS HAD
TRIED TO DO AND SYRIANS REFUSED TO LISTEN ALTHOUGH
EVENTUALLY THEY MODERATED SOMEWHAT. IS WAS THIS SYRIAN
RECALCITRANCE WHICH HAD DECIDED SARKIS TO RESIGN. I
ASKED IF SYRIANS WOULD COMPLY IF LEBANESE ASKED THEM TO
OCCUPY DIFFERENT POSITIONS IN OR AROUND BEIRUT AND WE
EXPLORED THE SUGGESTION THAT BEIRUT BE DISARMED. BOUTROS
SAID HE THOUGHT IF WE COULD HAVE QUIET FOR TWO OR THREE
WEEKS PERHAPS SOMETHING COULD BE WORKED OUT IN THIS
RESPECT, BUT FOR SYRIANS TO REDEPLOY AT THIS POINT
WOULD BE POLITICAL DEFEAT FOR SYRIAN ARMY WHICH THEY
WOULD NOT ACCEPT. THEREFORE, THERE WAS NO SENSE TRYING
IT TODAY. IT VITAL THERE BE BREATHING SPELL DURING WHICH
HE THOUGHT GOL COULD WORK OUT WAY TO REDEPLOY
SYRIANS WHICH WOULD NOT HURT SYRIAN PRESTIGE.

5. I ASKED WHETHER HE THOUGHT SYRIANS WOULD LEAVE
LEBANON IF ORDERED TO. BOUTROS SAID HE WAS NOT SURE
BUT CERTAINLY LEBANESE DID NOT WANT THEM TO LEAVE AT
THIS POINT. I HAD POSED SAME QUESTION YESTERDAY TO
SARKIS AND BOUTROS AND SARKIS' RESPONSE WAS THAT THEY
WOULD LEAVE BUT THEY WOULD DO IT IN A FASHION

DESIGNED TO HARM LEBANON TO MAXIMUM EXTENT. BOUTROS EXPLAINED THAT THEY MIGHT LEAVE BUT THEY WOULD COME BACK THROUGH SAIQA, MURABITUN AND OTHER GROUPS WHICH THEY WOULD SUPPLY WITH ARMS, MEN AND MONEY AND PROVOKE TO CAUSE AS MUCH TROUBLE AS POSSIBLE. BOUTROS SAID HE THOUGHT THIS WAS NO TIME TO MOUNT A CRUSADE AGAINST THE SYRIANS.

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6. I AGREED BUT SAID THAT WAS EXACTLY WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN IF THE PRESIDENT RESIGNED. THE ARMY, WHICH WAS ALREADY VERY RESTIVE, WOULD IMMEDIATELY JOINT WITH KATA'IB AND CHAMOUNISTS IN ATTACK ON SYRIANS AND THERE WOULD BE A BLOODY WAR. BOUTROS AGREED. I TOLD HIM THAT THERE WERE PUBLIC PRESSURES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD FOR GOVERNMENTS TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE SLAUGHTER HERE. BEGIN AND HIS GOVERNMENT WERE UNDER GREAT PRESSURE AND WEIZMAN WANTED US TO TRANSMIT MESSAGE TO SYRIANS THAT THERE WERE LIMITS BEYOND WHICH ISRAELIS WOULD NOT PERMIT SYRIANS TO GO. THERE SIMILAR PUBLIC OUTCRY IN U.S. WE WERE DISPOSED TO HELP. AS HE NOTED, WE WERE READY TO CARRY THE BALL IN THE UN. WE WANTED TO DO SOMETHING. WHAT DID LEBANESE WANT US TO DO?

7. BOUTROS SAID HE THOUGHT WE SHOULD PASS THE ISRAELI

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MESSAGE TO THE SYRIANS IN THE STARKEST TERMS AND URGE THEM TO TRY POLITICAL RATHER THAN MILITARY MEANS WHICH WERE LEADING TO WAR. WE SHOULD POINT OUT THAT EVEN THOUGH THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE MIGHT BE HERE LEGALLY, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WOULD NOT SIT QUIETLY BY IF THE SITUATION DETERIORATED FURTHER. WHILE THE BOMBARDMENT OF A CITY MIGHT HAPPEN IN TIMES OF WAR, IT WAS AN UNNATURAL ACT AND THE WORLD COMMUNITY WOULD NOT TOLERATE ITS BEING DONE IN COLD BLOOD. WE SHOULD POINT OUT TO THE SYRIANS THAT IF FIGHTING RESUMES QUESTION WILL CERTAINLY MOVE TO SECURITY COUNCIL, WHICH WILL SPLIT LEBANON. IF SYRIANS DO NOT WANT PARTITION, THEY SHOULD TAKE THIS INTO CONSIDERATION. WE SHOULD POINT OUT TO THEM THAT THE THREAT OF ISRAELI RETALIATION MIGHT PROVOKE SUCH RESORT TO SECURITY COUNCIL. HE COMMENTED THAT THIS ARGUMENT MIGHT CONDITION SYRIANS TO IDEA THEY MIGHT HAVE TO FACE SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE AT SOME POINT.

8. WITH REGARD TO ISRAELIS, BOUTROS ASKED THAT WE URGE THEM IN STRONGEST TERMS TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE CHRISTIAN TO REFRAIN FROM TAKING ACTION NOW. THE MILITIAS SHOULD ACCEPT A PLAN OF SETTLEMENT ARBITRATED BY THE LEBANESE AUTHORITIES. HE NOTED THAT THE CURRENT CALM IN BEIRUT (I USED WORD CEASE-FIRE AND HE IMMEDIATELY SAID THAT WAS NOT IN THE SYRIAN LEXICON. THEY CONSIDERED THAT THERE COULD BE NO CEASE-FIRE WITH A BUNCH OF GANGS LIKE THE PHALANGE) WAS DUE TO THE FACT THAT THE PHALANGE AND THE AHRAR WERE NOT SHOOTING. AS SOON AS THEY RESUMED FIRING, THE SYRIANS WOULD RESPOND HEAVILY AND THE LEBANESE HAD NO CONTROL OVER THE MAGNITUDE OF THE SYRIAN RESPONSE. IF THIS HAPPENED, HE THOUGHT SARKIS WOULD GO AHEAD WITH HIS RESIGNATION. BOTH SYRIANS AND ISRAELIS SHOULD KNOW THAT IF SARKIS RESIGNS THE SITUATION WILL GO ABSOLUTELY OUT OF CONTROL. IT WILL BE VERY DANGEROUS FOR EVERYBODY AND EVERYBODY SHOULD DO HIS UTMOST TO PREVENT THIS

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HAPPENING. WHAT THE ISRAELIS COULD DO WAS TO URGE IN STRONGEST TERMS THAT MILITIA NOT RESUME FIRING AND NOT DO ANYTHING TO AGGRAVATE THE SITUATION.

9. I ASKED WHAT PRESIDENT'S INTENTIONS WERE ABOUT RESIGNING. BOUTROS SAID HE HAD PUT HIS RESIGNATION IN THE FREEZER WITH THE HOPE THAT A WAY OUT OF THE PRESENT IMPASSE WOULD BE FOUND. IF IT COULD NOT BE FOUND, HE WOULD GO AHEAD AND RESIGN.

PARKER

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